

# World Fellowship Sunday 2007



**Text: Jeremiah 1:4-10**

**Suggested Hymns (or select hymns from your tradition)**

*“Amazing Grace”* – MWC International Songbook 2003: # 10

*“Come Receive His Joy”* - MWC International Songbook 2003: # 23 / 1990: # 4

*“Lo, I am with you to the end”* – MWC International Songbook 2003: # 45

**Prayers: local and global**

See the list of prayer requests from each continent.

**Story for the Children**

(From *101 Devotionals With Children* by June Galle Krehbiel, Herald Press 1999, Scottsdale, PA 15683. All rights reserved. Used by permission.)

## Raindrops

After the rain, a puddle of water stood in the yard. Abby, wearing her old yellow raincoat and red boots, saw the sky reflected in the water and leaned down for a closer look. Then more raindrops fell, and a few of them landed in the puddle. Each drop rippled outward, connecting with the others. “They’re making friends.” Abby exclaimed, running to the house. “Come and see the raindrops making friends!”

Jesus wanted his disciples to be like raindrops. He commanded them to go out to all people and teach them about God.

When Jesus touches our lives, he wants us to be like raindrops. He wants us to ripple outward and share the good news. When we’re excited about Jesus, we will share that with other people. We want others to know

how wonderful it is to have a friend like Jesus. After all, it’s hard for a raindrop who loves Jesus to stay in one place.

Think about how you might be a raindrop for Jesus today. Then, start rippling!

Prayer: Dear Jesus, I want to be a raindrop for you. Fill me with your love as I reach out to others. Amen.

Clincher: “Eternal life is yours. Celebrate. Don’t hold this good news to yourself. Tell everyone.”

- Quoted from Sally Schreiner

## **Sharing**

In advance, ask several individuals to tell their stories of witnessing with boldness, or of courage in the midst of suffering for their faith, or of their vision for bold and Christ-like congregational activity.

## **Sermon**

Any or all of the resource material can be adapted for your use.

## **Suggestion for Closing Hymn**

*“God of Grace and God of Glory”* – MWC International Songbook 2003: # 34

## **Sending/Benediction**

Go out in the power of the Spirit. The Lord says, “Go to all to whom I send you. Speak whatever I tell you. Do not be afraid. I have put the words in your mouth. I am with you.”

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

## *Prayer requests from around the world*

### **Africa**

- Tribal wars, clan divisions, food shortages and even famine in some areas afflict many parts of Africa, for example, Darfur (in Sudan), Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast and Liberia. Pray for God's mercy on His people in those areas.
- Tribal differences and personalities create splinter groups within Anabaptist-related churches. Pray for a new spirit of unity and that church leaders in the MWC community look for ways to reconcile with those groups.
- HIV/AIDS is increasing in the African continent. Many countries receive assistance from Western governments and international NGOs (non-governmental organizations) but corruption hinders aid from reaching the most needy. Pray that God will change the hearts of African leaders to be fair to their citizens.
- Pray for all corrupt leaders and undemocratic, arrogant governments in Africa to reconcile and be merciful to the suffering poor under their regimes.
- Pray for the Muslim president of Tanzania to maintain the peace and harmony enjoyed in that country so that the church's worship and evangelism is not hindered.

### **Asia**

- Amidst natural disasters, social restlessness, and economic slow-down, pray that God will enable governments to cope with multiple problems, give leaders wisdom in making decisions and ability to make significant improvements.
- Various national and international mission boards do evangelism among the 85% of the 200 million people in Indonesia who are still non-believers. Pray that God will open more hearts to believe in Christ. Pray for courage and wisdom for evangelists in proclaiming the good news, despite much oppression and opposition.
- Christian faith and witness is thriving in many countries. Praise God for the many who believe in Jesus Christ as the way, the truth and the life. Pray for these Christians and that many more will join in following Christ.

### **Europe**

- We continue to hope for church growth in Europe (North and South).
- Pray for openness to put God's will into practice in our churches and countries.
- Pray that we do not forget the poor, strangers, and immigrants and that we will keep our eyes open for the disadvantaged in our society.

### **Latin America**

- In some parts of the continent people are victims of kidnappings, terrorist activities and other hidden crimes. Many, including Christians and leaders, lose their lives. Pray for God's will to be fulfilled in these areas.
- Pray for the Mennonite leaders in Paraguay who are preparing for Assembly 15 in 2009. Many different groups, including several indigenous ones, are represented on the planning team. Pray for unity and the witness this brings to many in Paraguay.
- Pray for governments who are under tremendous pressure from powerful outside countries to submit to their economic and military demands. This pressure often results in terrorist activities, which can affect the church in various ways.

### **North America**

- Commitment to the values and goals of God's Kingdom in the face of social pressure is difficult. Christians are tempted to join government agenda and to support unjust wars and extreme measures to fight against terrorism. Pray for the North American church and for Mennonite and Brethren in Christ brothers and sisters.
- The poor, those living in the inner city and native groups are often forgotten or ignored by the church. Pray for new vision and action by Mennonites and Brethren in Christ for these groups.
- While the church is growing elsewhere in the world, it is struggling in North America. Pray for renewal and for renewed church planting efforts.
- Pray for a heart of generosity, for release of wealth that the church might share with others and that governments will allocate more funds for international aid

## *North American profile*

North America is a continent of contrasts. In Canada and the United States, there is both great wealth and deep poverty and homelessness. There are vast natural resources and great beauty as well as the ugliness of greed and environmental abuse. There are positive democratic traditions as well as cynicism and mistrust of political systems.

Both countries have been settled by immigrant peoples, but the fear of strangers and racism has led to hurtful social policies. Both countries have historical Christian roots, yet secularism, neglect of the poor and the myth that violence solves problems abound.

The challenge for the North American church is to live faithfully and sacrificially for Christ, to engage with a culture that is materialistic, self-centered and that glorifies violence without conforming to that culture. Another challenge is religious pluralism which leads to being hesitant

about witnessing for Christ because one doesn't want to be viewed as insensitive.

For some churches, faith is equated with nationalism. Others equate faith with personal piety. Praise the Lord, there are also churches which are passionate about evangelism and peace and social justice, building sharing communities and reaching the postmodern generation.

Mennonite and Brethren in Christ denominations reflect this diversity within our congregations. We want to listen to our youth and young adults who want to be committed to a church that is making a difference, locally and globally. We want to do God's will, to demonstrate God's saving grace and to follow Jesus Christ into the broken places of our world. And we want to do so with boldness through the power of the Holy Spirit.

## *Resource materials*

### **Story of a youth initiative by Sarah Thompson (USA)**

Just weeks before Sarah Thompson graduated from college in May 2006, she received an invitation to join a group of Mennonite young adults riding bicycles across the US. The goal of "bikemovement" was to explore what church means to young adults today and their dreams for making it a relevant and nurturing environment.

Sarah had not planned on such an activity but the vision for a project dedicated to connecting the conversation of young adult Christians to the church compelled her to participate.

"Moving in a high-speed bike pack in 100-degree weather through the crosswinds of Idaho can only be characterized as two things: crazy, or experiencing the boldness that comes from following the call of God to witness.

"We have grown up in the church, but as we enter a time of transition in our lives we have complex questions that are not necessarily discussed or accepted in our church families. We want to challenge the church to listen to our ideas

and feelings and our critiques of some institutional practices.

We wondered what other young adults were experiencing about church and the message of Jesus in their lives. We dedicated the months of July and August to begin a nationwide conversation. A bold move, some may say. It was a bold move for the purpose of witnessing, listening, and creating community, that is, creating together the church that we want to see," said Sarah.

Sarah was the AMIGOS (Mennonite World Conference young adult) representative in "bikemovement," connecting conversations in the USA to those of young adults around the globe and declaring that the future of young adults in the church and of the global church are bound together.

The trip's transforming experiences will culminate in Paraguay in 2009 when young adults come together as bold witnesses at the Global Youth Summit.

## **Story of a missional church by Jack Suderman (Canada)**

Canada is a nation of immigrants. Many have come as refugees from areas experiencing severe conflict, such as Laos, Vietnam, Rwanda, Serbia, Bosnia, Iraq, Iran, Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Sudan.

In one city, one Mennonite congregation was German- and English-speaking, but attendance was going down. The members of the church needed to decide whether to stick to their beloved ways or to change to accommodate the newcomers moving into the neighbourhood. They loved their hymns and worship style. They loved the way they celebrated Christmas, the food they shared, the serenity and sober atmosphere of the worship service. And most of all, they loved each other. They were like family. They supported each other when they got sick and old. But many families moved away, and it was difficult to attract neighbours who knew no German and very little English.

So the congregation decided that, although family is important, Christian love needs also to touch those not yet in the church. It offered English classes to new immigrants, help with school work for children, legal aid to get Canadian citizenship papers, counselling and help in searching for jobs and housing. Most importantly, it offered warmth and relationships.

The church began to change. Worship was livelier, using several languages and different songs. There was more noise because many children came. The food changed. The older people learned to love the newcomers. And the newcomers learned what it means to be Christian, Mennonite and Canadian. Some wanted to be baptized. Today that congregation is alive and growing and it understands better how the gospel of Jesus Christ needs to be shared with those who have not yet heard or responded to it.

## **“Anabaptists Engaging Global Mission: The 21st Century” by Wilbert Shenk (USA)**

16th century Anabaptism was a renewal movement that understood that a faithful church is oriented to the kingdom of God, not the kingdoms of this world. The missional church does not depend on governments or secular sponsorship of missionary witness. The scope of faithful mission is “all peoples.” Jesus, the One God sent into the world, is our primary model for missionary witness. Each generation, recognizing that cultures change

continuously, must discern afresh the specific ways it is to carry out this witness; but this must be done in the light of certain defining convictions: (a) the kingdom of God is the starting point; (b) Jesus is our model; (c) witness must be without coercion; (d) as citizens of God’s kingdom we are ‘under obligation’ to all peoples; (e) mission methods must be consistent with the ultimate goal of mission.

## **Sermon prompts (based on the Jeremiah passage)**

- When God called Jeremiah to serve him, Jeremiah gave an excuse, but his real reason was fear. God delivers us from timidity and fear with the promise of God’s power and constant presence. Such boldness is a gift from God. Jeremiah needed to actively trust God for the courage to speak to a hostile audience. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit gave boldness to the disciples (John 20:19-22, Acts 1:8 and chapter 2). When persecuted, the early church did not pray that the threats would be removed or for their safety, but for greater boldness in witnessing (Acts 4:23-31).

- Youth are called to God’s work, to make sacrifices and are given boldness by God. Some biblical examples are Jeremiah; Shadrach,

Meshach and Abednego; Mary, the mother of Jesus; and Timothy. Youth today want a relationship with God and to make a difference for Christ in our hurting world.

- God commissioned Jeremiah by touching his mouth. Jesus promised that his disciples would be given the words to say when they were opposed and persecuted (Matthew 10:16-20). The early Anabaptists immersed themselves in the Bible, using the words of Scripture as they spoke to each other, witnessed to unbelievers, testified in court and sang in prison. God calls the church today to speak to our society and culture. Like Jeremiah, we are to confront evil, offer hope based on God’s faithfulness, and build up the people of God.